

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN

About 160 feet south of the farmhouse at 3271 Cyrus Road
Cyrus
Wayne County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-266-C

HABS
WVA
50-CYRUS,
2C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN

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Location:

About 160 feet south-southwest of the farmhouse at 3271 Cyrus Road (County Road 1/6), Cyrus, Wayne County, West Virginia.

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17. 362390 4240870.
USGS Quadrangle: Burnaugh, West Virginia/ Kentucky

Significance:

The Barn is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure associated with the Abraham Jackson Cyrus Farmstead. The Cyrus farmstead is significant in terms of its association with the locally prominent Cyrus family, and with the early commercial and social history of the village of White's Creek. The barn was built on lands owned by Abraham Cyrus (1818-1903). It was used first as a general purpose barn, but in the late 1880s housed a grain mill. The mill processed grain off the Cyrus family and other local farms, and apparently was run with a general store just to its north. After 1900 the barn was modified as a cattle and dairy barn used by the Cyruces and Drowns, families related by marital and economic ties. The barn is one of very few remaining in the lower Big Sandy River Valley, a region much affected by industrial development.

Description:

The barn is positioned along the edge of a high terrace overlooking bottomland along the Big Sandy River to the east. South, east, and northeast of the barn are small lots where the dairy and beef cattle were pastured. North of the barn are the house lot and its truck gardens. Today, the Barn seems spatially isolated and well-spaced from other buildings: the Brooder House (HABS No. WV-266-D) is 98 feet to the southeast, the Equipment Shed (WV-266-E) 114 feet south, and the Wash House (WV-266-B) 111 north. However, formerly, a drive-through grain crib sat just 13 feet east of the barn, and a commercial building (the Chapman store) stood about 60 feet east (specific site unknown). There is no evidence that the barn had an above-ground silo.

The barn itself consists of two constructions: an original building with a gabled roof and hay hood, and, off the south side,

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 2)

a newer addition with a shed roof. Only the original construction has an independent frame. Siding and nailer girts on the south side of the older building were removed just before the addition was built. Each part has two stories. The ground floors of each are contiguous. However, the loft in the addition is two feet lower than the loft in the original barn. The present plan of the barn is a rectangle, 50 feet 2 inches north-south by 39 feet 2 inches east-west, nominally 50 by 39 feet. This plan is comprised of two parts: the original plan, a rectangle 50 by 25 feet, and the 14 foot-wide addition. Orientation of the barn's ridgeline is 120° magnetic (nominally east in descriptions below).

The barn's three roofs are covered by metal sheeting which varies in design and application. The gable roof is covered by 265 two-foot panels of standing-seam metal sheets laid over boards on 22 rafters: the north side is lapped to and laid from the west; the south, lapped to or laid from the east. The shed roof consists of 245 raised-seam panels, each 25 inches wide, lapped to the east; the edges of its end panels are turned down as a weather-wise technique. The hay hood is covered by corrugated sheet metal. The ridge of the gabled roof is surmounted by three lightning rods, the center one of which is a weather vane topped by a cow. Grounds for the rods run to the earth down the original barn's northeast corner (north face) and southwest corner (west face).

The barn's exterior siding is of two kinds: vertical boards, occasionally with battens, and metal channel siding laid over vertical boards. The boards are of tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). The gabled barn is covered exclusively by vertical variable-width board siding. Metal siding – identical to the roofing – covers board siding on the shed addition's south end, west end (incompletely), and southeast corner. Battens exist only in two areas contiguous to the metal siding: the lower half of the west wall of the gabled barn (3-inch lath battens), and the entire height of the east wall of the shed addition. The metal siding and battens were applied as a further measure against the weather, particularly the most severe rain storms, which at the Cyrus place are believed to come from the southwest.

Much of the board siding, especially on the north and west sides

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 3)

(main structure), is quite weathered – curled, fissured, and powdery. After having become somewhat weathered, the board siding apparently was taken off, turned end over end, and reapplied. All nails exposed to view on the barn's exterior are round-shanked, disk-headed nails, manufactured after ca. 1876. Square shank nails can be seen in only two places: in the casing for the second-story door on the north face (and the door itself), and, very rarely, as broken remnants in the board siding.

The siding presently is pierced by eleven windows, five doors, three hatches, and an opening for the hay hood. All eight windows in the south addition are identical, having hopper-style casements and six-pane sash; there are five on the south face, one on the west, and two on the east. Windows in the original structure slide aside atop nailer girts, and vary in sash design and pane number, two- and four-pane on the north face, and six-pane on the west. Formerly, there was another sliding window left of the small door on the east face (into Area 1) (evidenced by its track still in place atop the nailer girt there). The two-pane sash actually is comprised of two single-pane sash, which slide separately on the same track.

Of the six doors, four provide entry to the main structure, and two to the shed addition. Two sliding doors close opposite ends of the central drive (Areas 3 and 4), and both slide aside to the east. Inscriptions on the hanging rollers of the north door read: "F.E. Myers & Bro./ Ashland, O./ Stayon/ OK" (the rollers on the south door are obscured by a narrow hood of metal sheeting). Three hinged doors pierce the east end of the main structure; all were hinged on the outer right side. The one at the east end of the newer loft (Area 9) is missing its door, which opened out. The door into Area 8 opens inwardly. Access up to this door, and the main loft (Area 8), is gained via an iron ladder and rungs bolted to the outer east face. These were salvaged from the outside of an old wooden railroad car, probably a coal gondola. The third door opens out from the stall with the cattle ramp (Area 1). The fourth hinged door is the only one constructed using square-shank cut nails, both in its casing and the door itself. This ledged and braced door opens in from the north side of the main loft (Area 8), and is the only door in the barn dating to its construction ca. 1870.

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 4)

Three hatches pierce the barn's north face. One near the northeast corner closes off the entry to the cattle ramp (built 1968, in Area 1). Two rope hatches are found at the northwest corner, one on each floor, and each being foot square and having a large eye-hook screwed into an adjacent beam. The upper hatch and its hanging eye-hook were used in transmitting tractive power to the hay fork via a pulley in the gable at the west end of the barn.

The barn sits atop a foundation of fairly well coursed, quarry-faced sandstone blocks laid with a good hard mortar. The foundation is one-foot thick and about two feet high in three exposed courses. It underlies the periphery of the entire barn, 50 by 39 feet in plan, and is absent only for the opposing drive doors and the small door into Area 1. The foundation at the left (east) side of the north drive door has been broken back several inches to the nearby post and refaced. The shed's three-sided foundation was joined at the old barn foundations southeast and southwest corners. Stones of the wall under the main structure are of a striated grayish sandstone, and the addition, of light brown sandstone. Horizontal and vertical joints under the main structure are pointed with two incised lines and a raised fillet between them; mortared joints under the addition are plain.

Inside the barn, all posts on the periphery (nine in the main structure, and ten in the addition) rest on plank sills atop foundation walls. All interior posts rest atop stone blocks, or wood chocks atop such blocks. Similar blocks are exposed at the interior northwest and southwest corners, but are buried largely beneath the foundation walls. This indicates that the main structure originally sat exclusively upon pier blocks. As the interior posts are longer than the peripheral posts, it is clear that the sills and post ends of the main structure were cut out and the structure was raised and re-set upon a new foundation and plank sills (this does not apply to the walls and sills of the shed addition, which are original to it). The fact that the original pier blocks still support the south line of now-interior posts suggests that whoever built the new foundation purposely left them that way so the structure could more easily be expanded in plan.

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 5)

The frame of the barn (main structure) consists of heavy, hewn, oak members (posts and beams), and oak braces cut by a circular saw. These elements are joined by mortises and tenons. Nailer girts on the ground floor and loft are mortised into posts and occasionally fastened further using cut nails. The hewn posts of the two levels are not continuous beams, but are stacked end-on-end (their method of joining at floor level is unclear). An interesting difference between the posts of the two levels is that chalk lines were used to mark out brace mortises on all posts of the ground floor, and none in the main loft. Braces throughout the original structure are in all respects identical.

The floor boards in the main are supported by five thwartwise beams, and four sets each of five circular-sawed joists. Joist ends are supported atop the hewn side girts. The joists generally are not tenoned, except where they meet or cover four framed wells (for stairs) which alternate at the ends of the four joist panels. The absence of mortises for joists along the existing stairwell shows that it is original to the early barn. The other three wells are potential positions for stairs, once flooring is cut out and the short joists within are taken up.

The roof framing was replaced sometime before the hay hood was built on (in the mid-1930s). The present rafters, purlin boards, and end trusses are not original. Presently, the end rafters are joined by a collar beam fastened with wire nails. The absence of mortise holes on the tops of the end girts indicates that this was the original method as well (Area 8). The two plank braces near the center of the main loft (Area 8) are fastened, using wire nails, between heavy oak posts and a thwartwise beam beneath the floor. This bracing replaced a number of interior cross-beams which were removed to expand the capacity of the main loft for storing hay. The braces were added when the roof framing was rebuilt.

The ground floor presently is subdivided into seven areas. The original barn consists of Areas 1, 3, 5, and 6; and the shed addition, of Areas 2, 4, and 7. Areas 1 and 2, the central drive and its extension, can be separated by a double gate. Areas 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 are large stalls. Formerly, there were a line of ten pipe

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 6)

stanchions for milk cows in the shed addition, seven in Area 7 and three in Area 2. Stanchions were 42 and 50 inches wide. The cows faced north and fed from concrete feed troughs along the north side of Areas 7 and 2. The pipes have been removed though the troughs remain. Formerly, there were other stanchions in Area 6. Formerly, there were two long wooden feed troughs built back to back on the partition between Areas 5 and 6, but only the trough in Area 5 survives. Both troughs were built atop a long piece of an old summer beam, whose ends lie directly atop two stone pier blocks and under the ends of two interior posts, to which the summer is not tenoned. The troughs were built when the original barn was put on its existing foundation. Part of Area 1 is occupied by the stairwell and a cattle ramp. When the ramp was built to exit the north wall, the stairs were reversed in their well. The present stairs were put together using wire nails. The stairs' former position is evidenced by clean shadows marking its former stringers, and by holes and stubs of cut nails within these, these latter indicating that the stairs were an original feature of the barn.

Flooring on the ground level of the barn consists of massively-laid panels of poured concrete invariably as large as any given area (Area 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7), or dirt (Area 5 and beneath the lowest stair). Holes for stanchion pipes and assorted stall and gate posts – which have been removed in Areas 3, 6, and 7 – have been patched with concrete. The central drive floor (Area 1) was poured first, around 1920. The floor in Area 1 was poured upon construction of the cattle ramp there ca. 1968.

Flooring in the two lofts (Areas 8 and 9) is dissimilar. In the main loft (Area 8), flooring consists of variable-width boards 1.25 to 2 inches thick, fastened using cut nails, and run east-to-west. The floor is pierced only by the stairwell at the northeast (leading down to Area 1) and a fenced-in square hole allowing fodder to be thrown down to the central drive (Area 3). The fenced hole, the stairwell, and the upper landing are fastened with wire nails. In the newer loft (Area 9), flooring is five-inch-wide tongue-and-groove boards, run east-to-west and fastened with wire nails. This flooring is pierced only by a hatch with a hinged door, allowing fodder to be dropped down to the drive (Area 4) between the ends of two feed troughs, and two crude holes

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 7)

sawed-out above the feed trough in Area 2. The hinged hatch dates to the erection of the shed addition; the crude holes were done much more recently.

The barn was electrified in the 1940s. The fuse box and circuit breaker are on the east wall of Area 2. The barn has but three light fixtures, one each in Areas 2, 3, and 8. Water was obtained from a spigot down in the parged brick box set into the concrete apron around the southeast corner of the barn.

History:

The barn was built around 1870 on lands owned by Abraham Cyrus (1818-1903). It may have served initially as a general purpose barn, but after 1900 was a dairy and cattle barn. Local tradition asserts also that the barn building "used to be a mill", or that there was a mill in the barn (Abe Cyrus, Ben and Laura Drown, and Phyllis Cyrus interviews). It is likely that after the Cyrus Mills on White's Creek were destroyed by the 1883 and 1884 floods, a small horse-powered grain mill was put in the barn, near Martin Chapman's store, and was run with the store. The grain mill probably ran for a few years between 1884 and the early 1890s.

The barn was used for about five years by young Perry J. Cyrus (1870-1898) after his marriage in 1893 to Leah V. Drown (1872-1915). Upon his death his widow's male kin took over running the farm, and did so between 1899 and 1920. The Drowns extensively rebuilt the barn between 1900 and 1910, adapting it for housing and feeding a greater number of cattle. Changes specifically attributable to the Drowns are: the barn on a new foundation, rebuilding of the roof framing, the wooden feed troughs (Areas 5 and 6), and the fenced hole in the main loft (Area 8 to Area 3). The hole in the loft was fenced by Shelby Drown (1867-1954) in 1909; the hole was cut out for him by Abe, who was 12 at the time. The letters "BEN", written prominently in creosote on the hewn beam over the central drive (south end, Area 1), are short for Benjamin Fisher Drown (1826-1903), the father of Shelby, Leah, and Fisher Bowen, the three of whom lived at one time or other at the Cyrus place. It is likely that Benjamin supervised his sons in rebuilding the barn.

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 8)

Upon his majority and marriage, Abraham Jackson Cyrus (born 1897) took over running his father's farm, still assisted particularly at first by the Drown kin. Abe used the barn between 1920 and 1943, when his son Abraham Frederick (1921-1990) – Abe Junior – took up farming. Abe Junior used the barn for cattle between 1943 and ca. 1980.

Abe Senior originally kept Jersey cows. Later, when he went into dairying he switched to Holsteins, which were good milk-producers. Abe Senior tried dairy farming in the 1920s, but got out of it after fewer than 10 years because it was too much trouble. In 1928 a number of dairy herds at White's Creek had to be killed off entirely when they contracted the disease brucellosis. After that, Abe and Abe Junior kept white-faced beef cattle. (Clifford Smith and Larry Hatten interviews)

The barn barely was saved from disaster one haying-time. This occurred when new hay still was passed up through the well hole in the loft floor above the cross drive (Area 3), sometime in the 1920s. Abe Cyrus and Fisher Drown were bringing up loads of hay in two wagons from the lower field. Abe's wagon somehow caught fire coming up the steep lane, and this wasn't noticed until his wagon was in the barn, blocked in by Drown's wagon. It was quite a desperate time, but they finally got it out. (Ben Drown interview)

In the early 1920s Abe Cyrus built a shed for tool storage at the southwest corner of the barn. It was removed just before the southern shed addition (Areas 2, 4, 7, and 9) was built. After the tool shed was removed, tools were kept in the east part of the drive-through corn crib (no longer extant). The southern shed addition was built in the late 1920s. William Johnson and his son Thomas helped Abe put up the frame, the most difficult task. William Johnson was a local carpenter who lived about 1.5 miles to the south at Cedar Branch.

The hay hood and hay fork were put on sometime after the shed addition, in the mid-1930s. Inscriptions on the hay fork read: "Patented March 2, 1926/ Hudson/ Chicago, Illinois"; part numbers include: "RA 177" (on the guard), "RA 77 Z" (on the rotor), "HAF890B" (or "HAF8908") (on the tines or prongs).

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 9)

Originally, the hay fork, and the metal parts of the two gable-end pulleys, were painted a bright red.

The loading chute (northeast corner, Area 1) was built in 1968 by Abe Junior. His earlier one outside was in poor condition because of the weather, so he decided to build its replacement inside. (Hatten interview) It was at this time that the direction of the stairs was reversed, to accommodate the chute.

Larry O. Hatten, a local dairy farmer, rented the barn from the Cyruses between 1986 and 1992. He made no changes to the building. Hatten used part of the Barn (Areas 1 and 7) to keep from seven to ten head of cattle, chiefly Angus and mixed-breed beef cattle, which were pastured on lots east of the barn.

In late 1992 and early 1993, archaeologists used the ground floor of the barn to store soil samples recovered from the excavation of a prehistoric Native American village site on the former Cyrus farm. The main loft was used as a recreational area, sleeping room, and, briefly, as a studio.

Sources:

Abraham Jackson Cyrus, with daughter-in-law Phyllis J. Cyrus
Interview by D. Bailey, 2-5 P.M., February 3, 1993

Ben Drown and wife Laura (Hazlett)
Interview by D. Bailey, 9:10-10:30 P.M., February 10, 1993

Larry O. Hatten
Interview by D. Bailey, 9-10 A.M., February 13, 1993

Clifford Smith
Interview by D. Bailey, 8-10:30 P.M., February 18, 1993

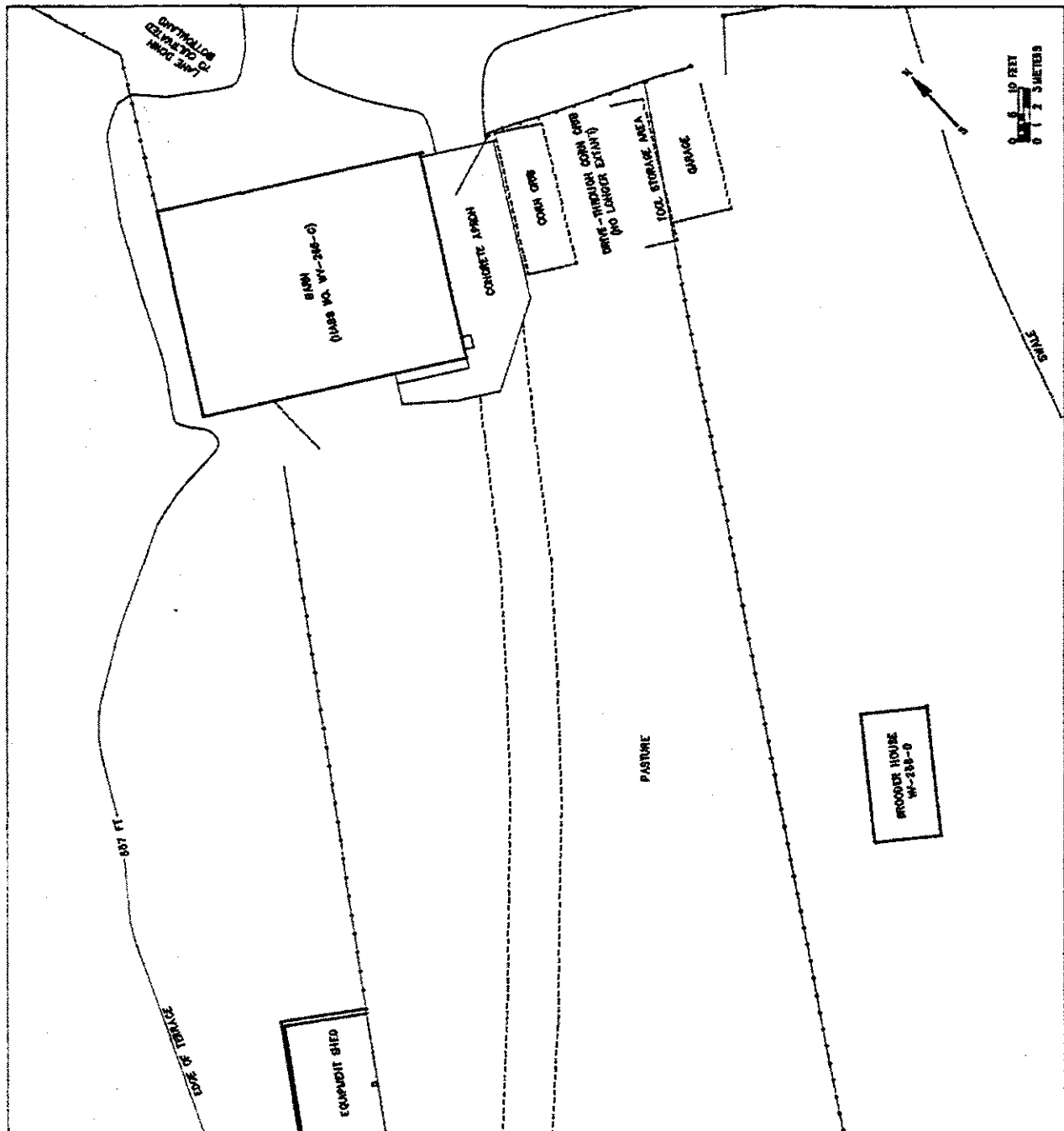
Historian:

Douglas L. Bailey, Consulting Archaeologist
618 Grant Street, Fairborn, Ohio 45324
May 31, 1994

ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 10)

MAP OF THE GROUNDS AROUND THE BARN AND OTHER OUTBUILDINGS

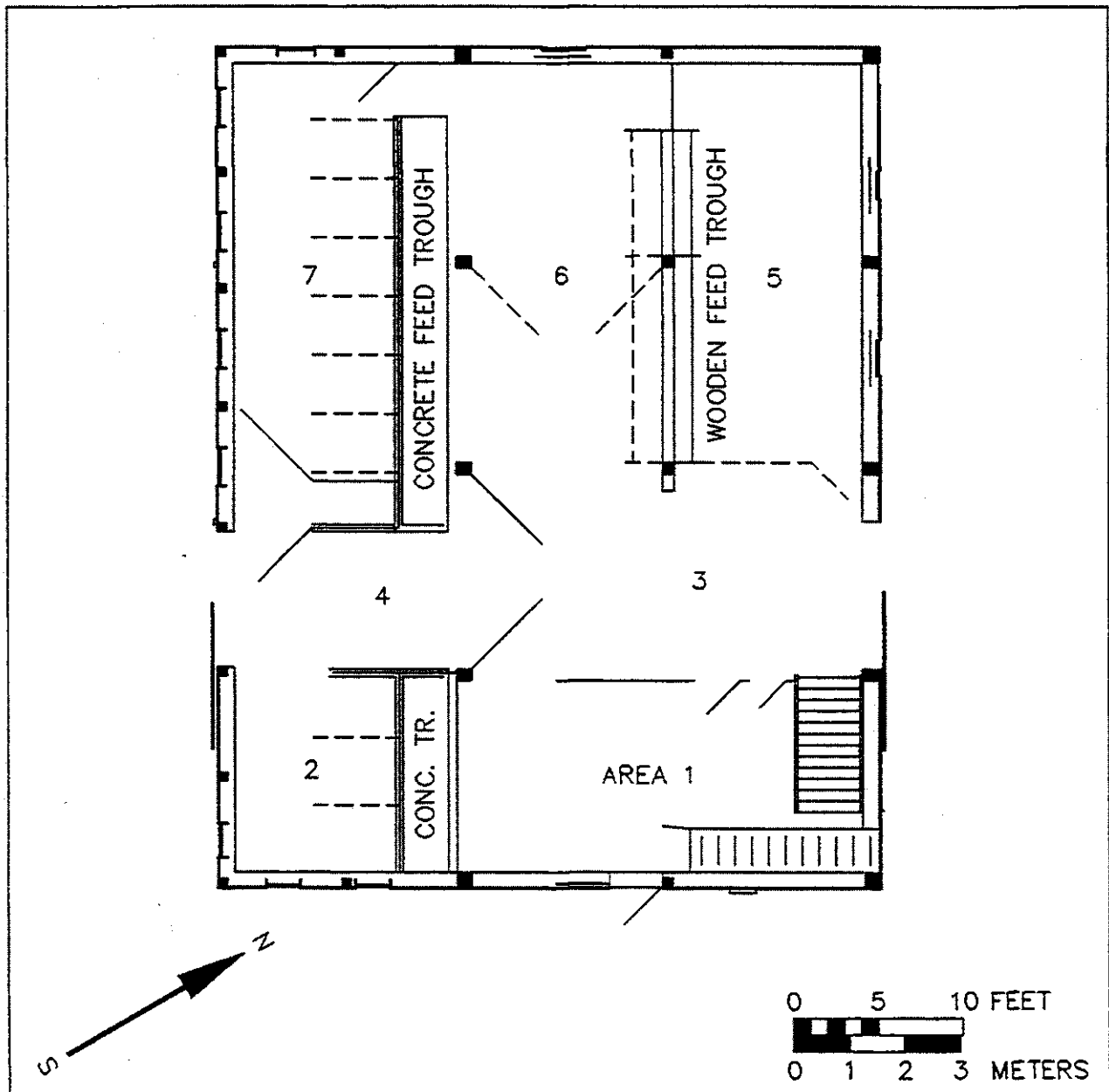
(Based on field data collected by D. Bailey, 1993.)



ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 11)

PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

(Based on field data collected by D. Bailey, 1993.)



ABRAHAM CYRUS FARMSTEAD, BARN
HABS No. WV-266-C (Page 12)

FLOOR PLAN OF LOFTS

(Based on field data collected by D. Bailey, 1993.)

